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ABSTRACT

This statistical brief provides an overview of Latino history in Nebraska and includes data tables that compare Latinos with other population groups in Nebraska and with Latinos in other parts of the Midwest. The first Europeans in the Midwest were Spanish, but they later abandoned their Midwest colonies, and today the Latinos in Nebraska are primarily of Mexican origin. The Mexican Revolution stimulated the flow of Mexicans to Nebraska in the early 1900s, where they found work in railroads, packing industries, and farming. Since the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, Latino population has grown to 2.3 percent of Nebraska's population, and since 1980 the Latino population has increased 32 percent, compared to an 18 percent increase for African Americans, and a 1 percent decrease for Whites. More Nebraska Latinos have 8 or less years of schooling than Whites or Blacks. Latinos leave school earlier than do Whites or Blacks; many leave to contribute to family income. Male and female Hispanics have higher labor force participation than Whites or Blacks, and have unemployment rates higher than Whites but lower than Blacks. Latinos tend to hold lower-paying jobs, partly due to educational attainment, but also to limited English fluency, bias, and discrimination. Median household income for Nebraska Hispanics is below the Midwest Hispanic income, and has deteriorated over the last 10 years. Hispanic poor families have increased between 1980 and 1990, while White poor families have decreased. (Contains 12 references.) (TD)

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SAMORA JULIAN RESEARCH INSTITUTE

JSRI

Statistical Brief No. 9
Cifras Breves No. 9

LATINOS IN NEBRASKA: A SOCIO-HISTORICAL PROFILE

By

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Latinos in Nebraska: A Socio-Historical Profile

Table of Contents

Highlights 1

Background 1

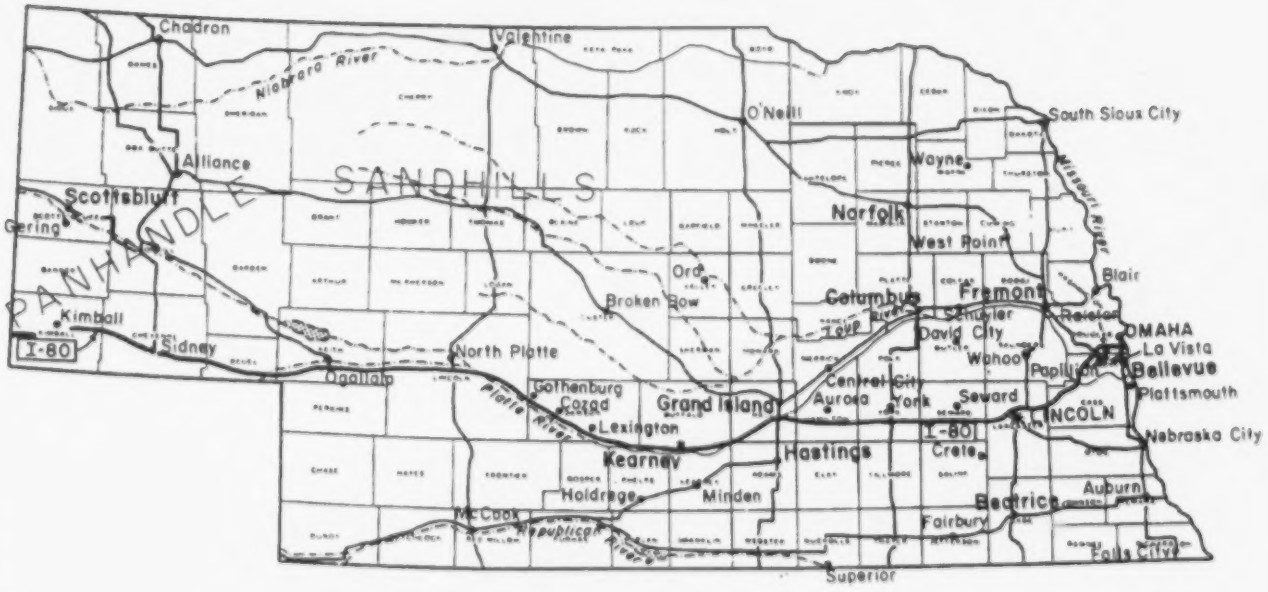
Demographic Patterns 2

Education and Employment 4

Family Wellbeing 5

Summary 6

References 7



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HIGHLIGHTS

Latinos have occupied important and expanding positions in Nebraska's economy. To date, however, relatively little is written about this unique group. Nebraska history, for example, contains little information about the Spanish and Mexican pioneers who explored its land long before the region was incorporated into the United States. Social scientists have hardly accounted for the employment and economic contributions of Latinos in agriculture, construction, services, and agro-industrial plants of Nebraska. Nonetheless, before long, Latinos will become an increasingly significant part of the political and social fabric of Nebraska. As part of the "browning of the Midwest," they will hold more positions in the private and public sectors and become more active voters on local decisions. Thus, it is important to address Latino issues and concerns and to relate these to the socio-history of Nebraska.

This Statistical Brief or CIFRAS, is a modest beginning towards a better understanding of Latinos in Nebraska. It provides an overview of Latino history and a set of tables based upon U.S. Census reports of Hispanics in Nebraska. The Tables and Figures compare and contrast Latinos with other population groups in Nebraska as well as Latinos in other parts of the Midwest. Comments and suggestions which add to this knowledge will be welcomed by the authors, c/o the Julian Samora Research Institute at Michigan State University.

BACKGROUND

Nebraska's history is known for its "flood of European immigrants," mostly Germans (Baltensperger 1985: p.80), and its heritage of American Indians (Luebke, 1995). Nebraska's population includes other ethnic and racial groups, Latinos, among them, whose background is little known.

The early history of Latinos in Nebraska is discussed by Richard Santillan (1994). In a draft of his forthcoming book, he criticizes historians for neglecting a century of Spanish and Mexican influence in the Midwest. For example, according to Santillan, Spanish soldiers became the first Europeans to enter the Midwest, clearly in Kansas in 1541. The word "Kansas" may derive from the Spanish word "cansar" meaning "to tire" which perhaps the Spanish used this word repeatedly looking for gold. Likewise, Spanish was spoken in the region decades before the English and French languages were spoken there. In subsequent years, into the 17th century, the Spanish traded in the area known today as St. Louis, Missouri and in several other trading posts along the Mississippi River. They introduced Pawnees and Omahas to horses, which were not native to America. The Indians, in turn, quickly adapted their horses to hunt bison of the prairies. Don Pedro de Villasur was reported killed in Nebraska territory by Pawnee Indians in 1720. Santillan adds that numerous Midwest cities were eventually abandoned by the Spanish colonists because of economic hardships in Spain, hostile Native Americans, unfriendly weather, rebellions within their colonies, and military threats from newly arrived European nations. According to Santillan, the retreat, however, did not entirely erase the cultural influences and contributions of the Spanish. Spain eventually negotiated a significant part of its Midwest holdings over to France in 1801, which France in turn sold to North Americans in 1803 as part of the Louisiana Purchase. In the nineteenth century and before restrictive U.S. immigration laws of the twentieth century, Mexicans worked in Midwest mines, mills, factories, and foundries in search of a better life.

Among the books on Nebraska, Baltensperger (1985) notes that Latinos are primarily of Mexican origin. He also observes that Mexican Americans conserve their culture, especially the use of Spanish language and, as a consequence, their family cohesiveness and awareness. Larsen and Cottrell (1982) point out that the flow of Mexicans to Nebraska was stimulated by the Mexican Revolution (roughly from 1910 to 1920) and economic opportunities for labor in railroads, packing industries, and farming. Larsen and Cottrell also indicate that packing industries brought in Mexican strikebreakers during a labor dispute in the early1900s, many of them remained in Omaha. Additionally, the authors claim that Mexicans are known for their strong sense of unity which has lead them to develop their own Roman Catholic Church, named Nuestra Senora de Guadalupe. Santillan (1994:p.4) also describes Latinos in the Midwest as people with "profound appreciation of hard work, religion, family ties, and noteworthy community achievements."

Exactly why and how Latinos settled in Nebraska is not clear. Nor do we know what processes and institutions contributed to Latino growth in Nebraska. In general, reports of Nebraska's Latinos are anecdotal and not very analytical. They do not explain the social history and patterns of settlement of this population.

It appears, however, that Mexican Americans were especially drawn to the Platte Valley, where the greatest opportunities for field labor and railroad employment have traditionally been found. Slesinger and Cautley (1988) found that most migrant and seasonal agricultural

workers had a home base in Texas. It is well known that *tejanos del Valle* have migrated and settled in the Midwest for economic and family reasons, mostly to get ahead.

Quoting Luebke (1995) "Spanish-speaking people, of whom Mexicans constitute about 80%, are more widely distributed across the state. They are especially numerous in Scottsbluff, Grand Island, and North Platte, in addition to Omaha and Lincoln." Latinos form 2.3% of the state's population, but in Scotts Bluff County, where many work in sugar beet production, they constitute 15% (Luebke 1995: p.363). In other parts of the state, many Mexican immigrants have been employed in meat-packing industries. But like Indians and African Americans, Spanish-speaking Nebraskans are almost always undernumerated by the census.

Since the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, which legalized many Mexican immigrants, several rural counties of Nebraska, and several communities throughout the Midwest, have added significant numbers of Latinos. Much of this growth has been attributed to employment opportunities and large scale investments in agribusiness plant and equipment. (see Martin, Taylor and Fix, 1996).

An interesting corollary is the community of Lexington, Nebraska. According to Gouveia and Stull (1996: p.4), the community grew from 6,601 people in 1990 to 8,544 in 1993 and changed from 4.9% to nearly 24% of the population being Latinos in that community. That is: Hispanics, "virtually all new immigrants," increased in Lexington by 2,021 persons in three years time. Gouveia and Stull also note that Dawson County, where Lexington sits, grew by 13%, making it and the neighboring Gosper County, Nebraska's fastest growing area in Nebraska between 1990-93.

This growth was attributed to the beef company called IBP, Inc., which added as many as 2030 new jobs in one small town. The story of IBP, Inc., and its employment of Latinos is a forthcoming publication of JSRI, authored by Gouveia and Stull. The findings are significant, showing that Latinos have become increasingly important to the labor force in Nebraska, adding reason for studying this dynamic population group.

DEMOGRAPHIC PATTERNS

Growing Presence

Table 1 shows that Nebraska had 36,969 Latinos in 1990, constituting 2.3% of the state's population of nearly 1.6 million people. Latinos grew in number from 28,025 in 1980, recording a rate of population growth of 31.91%, much higher than that of African Americans or Blacks, which increased from 47,944 to 56,711, at a rate of 18.29%. But as indicated in Table 1, the White population actually decreased in number and percent of the total population. What is revealing is that Latinos and Blacks, sustained the general population base of Nebraska. Concomitantly, without the growth in both Latinos and Blacks, Nebraska would have lost congressional representation and federal grants for the 1990's.

TABLE 1. NEBRASKA POPULATION BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: 1980-90

GROUP	*1980*	*1990*	*%*	*% CHANGE*
Total Pop.	1,569,825	1,578,385	100.00	0.55
White	1,475,376	1,460,095	92.51	-1.04
Black	47,944	56,711	3.59	18.29
Hispanic	28,025	36,969	2.34	31.91

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: p.44)

Midwestern trends indicate that one-quarter to one-third of the total population will belong to ethnic or racial minority groups in the next century. (see JSRI *NEXO*, Winter 1996). In many metropolitan counties, in particular, no single ethnic or racial group will hold the majority. This pattern indeed, is to be found in Nebraska, an indication of the trend towards wider diversity in the Midwest (Allen 1990).

Mostly Mexican-American

Latinos are counted by the U.S. Census of Population and constitute a population of several different national-origin groups. The major groups, in the United States, are Mexican-origin Latinos, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Others. The category for "others" includes persons who identify themselves as Hispanic with origins from the Caribbean nations, Central and South America and even Spain.

Table 2 breaks down the Latino population of Nebraska into the major subgroups. Most Latinos in Nebraska were of Mexican origin (80.2%) in 1990. Other important Latino groups included Puerto Ricans (3.1%) and Cubans (1.3%). Puerto Ricans grew faster relatively (84.9%) than Cubans (32.6%) and Mexicans (32.3%). However, in absolute terms, Mexicans accounted for most of the Hispanic growth during the decade, increasing from 22,431 in 1980 to 29,665 in 1990. Indeed, the change in Lexington, Nebraska, would indicate a continuing growth of Mexican origin Latinos.

TABLE 2. NEBRASKA POPULATION BY HISPANIC ORIGIN: 1980-90

GROUP	*1980*	*1990*	*%*	*% CHANGE*
All Hispanics	28,025	36,969	100.00	31.91
Mexican	22,431	29,665	80.24	32.25
Puerto Rican	627	1,159	3.14	84.85
Cuban	362	480	1.30	32.60
Other Hispanic	4,605	5,665	15.32	23.00

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: p46).

Also noteworthy is the growth in "Other Hispanics," by over 1,000 persons from 1980 to 1990. For now, there is little that can be added here as to their national origin or reasons for settling in Nebraska.

Unique within the Midwest

In terms of their Midwest position, Nebraska occupied the ninth place in the number of Latinos in 1990 (Table 3). Far ahead of Nebraska's Latinos were the states of Illinois with 52.4% (904,446), Michigan 11.7% (201,596), and Ohio 8% (139,696). The rest of the Midwest states showed a Hispanic population under 100,000 in 1990.

TABLE 3: HISPANIC POPULATION IN THE MIDWEST: 1980-1990

STATES	*1980*	*1990*	*%*	*CHANGE*
TOTAL MIDWEST	1,276,545	1,726,509	100.0	35.2
ILLINOIS	635,602	904,446	52.4	42.3
MICHIGAN	162,440	201,586	11.7	24.1
OHIO	119,883	139,696	8.1	16.5
INDIANA	87,047	98,788	5.7	13.5
KANSAS	63,339	93,670	5.4	47.9
WISCONSIN	62,972	93,194	5.4	48.0
MISSOURI	51,653	61,702	3.6	19.5
MINNESOTA	32,123	53,884	3.1	67.7
NEBRASKA	28,025	36,969	2.1	31.9
IOWA	25,536	32,647	1.9	27.8
N/S DAKOTAS	7,925	9,917	0.6	25.1

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: pp.43-44)

Relatively Urban

Latinos are mainly urban but with an important rural presence (see Table 4). As indicated in Table 4, 82.4% of Latinos were urban in 1990. This compares to Blacks who were 98.3% urban, Asian and Pacific Islanders, 90.7%, Whites 98.3%, and American Indian, Eskimo and Aleut, 52.5%.

TABLE 4: URBAN AND RURAL BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: 1990

RACE/ORIGIN	URBAN	PERCENT	RURAL	%
TOTAL POP.	1,043,984	66.1	534,401	33.9
WHITE	939,974	64.4	520,121	35.6
BLACK	55,731	98.3	980	1.7
AM. INDIAN, ESKIMO, ALEUT	6,150	52.5	5,569	47.5
ASIAN & PACIFIC ISLANDER	10,904	90.7	1,122	9.3
HISPANIC	30,460	82.4	6,509	17.6
OTHER	765	88.4	100	11.6

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994, Table 3)

Increase in Foreign Born Latinos

Foreign born Latinos (Table 5) increased from 13.5% in 1980 to 17.4% of Nebraska's Hispanic population in 1990. Overall, however, Nebraska's foreign born decreased from 2% to 1.8% of the total population.

The number of foreign born Latinos in 1990 is especially evident within the Mexican origin group (16% of 29,665, or 4,746). The "Other Hispanic" group (26.5% of 5,665, or 1,501), followed by the Cuban population (44.7% of 480, or 215), have higher percentages of foreign born but are fewer in number compared to Mexican Americans. We should not forget that Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens; nor overlook the fact that the category of "Other Hispanics" covers a large group of persons from of a diverse range of countries in Central and South America, adding to a rich diversity of ethnic groups.

TABLE 5: FOREIGN BORN PERSONS BY RACE & HISPANIC ORIGIN IN (% OF TOTAL): 1980-1990

RACE/ORIGIN	*1980*	*1990*
All Population	2.0	1.8
White	1.5	1.1
Black	1.6	1.3
Hispanic	13.5	17.4
Mexican	12.5	16.0
Puerto Rican	3.2	0.9
Cuban	51.8	44.7
Other Hispanic	16.9	26.5

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: Table 4)

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EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

Education

The education data for Nebraska's Latinos are not auspicious. Among Latinos, 25 years of age and over, 18% have 8 or less years of schooling, compared to only 7.8% of the White and 8.4% of the Black. Nonetheless, as shown in Figure 1A, Nebraska's Latinos are as educated as Latinos in Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio, i.e., about 60% have 12 years or more schooling. They are more educated than Latinos in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Kansas, but less educated than Latinos in Montana and Minnesota. However, Nebraska's Latinos had more college education than African Americans in seven of ten states (Figure 1B). But, Latinos in Nebraska, as in Illinois and Kansas, showed lower college education than local African Americans.

FIGURE 1A: NEBRASKA ADULTS, AGES 25 YEARS AND OVER, WITH AT LEAST 12 YEARS OF COMPLETED SCHOOLING, 1990 (In percent).

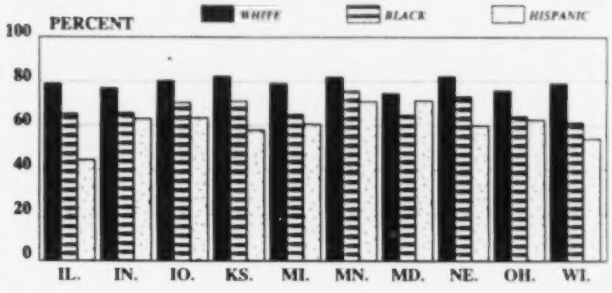
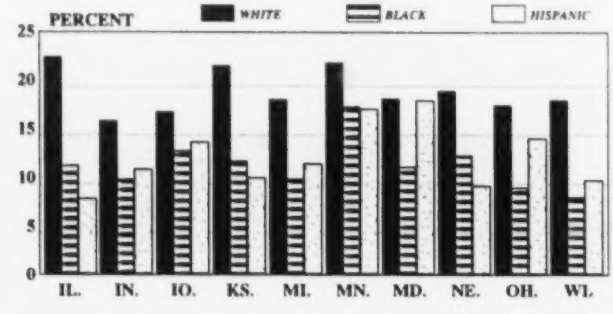


FIGURE 1B: PERCENT WITH AT LEAST 4 YEARS OF COLLEGE, 1990.



Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: p16)

Labor Force Participation and Unemployment

To some extent, Latinos leave school earlier than most other adults for economic reasons, i.e., to contribute to family income. This can be seen in terms of their high rates of labor force participation. According to Aponte and Siles (1994), in the Midwest, male Hispanics had higher labor force participation in 1990 than male Whites and Blacks, with rates of 81%, 75.8% and 63.8%, respectively. These figures reflect the degree to which males of working age, 16 years and older, are either working or looking for work. Labor force participation is presumed to fill the time necessary for staying in school. Similar patterns are evident among Midwest Latinas (female). In particular, adult Latinas had a high rate of labor force participation at 59.9%, compared with 57.3% for White women and 57.1% for black. In Nebraska the labor force participation was 81.3% for Latinos (males), 77.5% for White males and 67.7% for Black males. For females, the rates were: 64.2% for Latinas, 60.1% for White women, and 64.3% for Black women.

Although Latinos and Latinas are active in the labor market, they often go unemployed. In 1990, their rates of unemployment were twice as high as the rates of unemployment of White males and females, but only half as high as the rates for Blacks. In general figures, in 1990, the rates of unemployment were around 6.7% for Latinos/as, 3.0% for Whites, 12% for African Americans, and 20% for Native Americans.

Occupational and Industrial Employment

In Nebraska, Latinos held a variety of different jobs in 1990: 24.1% were operators, fabricators and laborers (OF&L), 23.4% were in technical sales and administrative jobs (TS&AS), 19.3% of them were in services, 17.2% in precision production, craft and repair occupations (PPC&R), 12.5% were managers and professionals (M&P), and 3.5% were in farming, forestry, and fishing (FFF). This is shown in Table 6.

TABLE 6: OCCUPATION OF EMPLOYED PERSONS BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: 1990

RACE/ORIGIN	M&P %	TS&AS %	SERVICES %	FFF %	PPC&R %	OF&L* %
TOTAL POP.	23.1	30.6	14.5	7.5	10.3	14.1
WHITE*	23.5	30.8	14.0	7.8	10.2	13.7
BLACK	18.1	32.0	23.0	0.5	7.3	19.1
AM. IND, ESK. & ALEUT.	17.2	23.0	22.6	3.6	12.7	20.8
ASIAN & PAC. ISLAND	23.6	27.1	22.1	1.3	12.6	13.2
HISPANIC	12.5	23.4	19.3	3.5	17.2	24.1

**M&P = Managerial & Professional; TS&AS = Tech Sales & Admin Support Occupations; FFF = Farming, Forestry & Fishing; PP&R = Precision Production, Craft & Repair Occupations; OF&L = Operators, Fabricators & Laborers*
*** American Indian and Aleut*
Source: Same as Table 1

Table 7 shows that Latinos were primarily employed in the service industry (26.6%), manufacturing (24.7%) and retail trade (18.2%). Despite this occupational mix, it is generally known that Latinos tend to hold the lower paying jobs. This position is most surely related to the educational attainment of Latinos. But other factors may bar Latinos from upward mobility in employment, such as: foreign born status, limited English language fluency, and bias and discrimination against Latinos in some industries.

As indicated, about 71.8% of Latino families were headed by a married couple; higher than the rate for Blacks and American Indians but lower than the rates for Whites and Asians. In 1990, the percent of families headed by women with no spouse present in Nebraska was 19.3% for Latinos, 47.7% for African Americans, 39% American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut, 10.4% for Asian and Pacific Islander and 10.3% for Whites (Aponte and Siles 1994). The proportion of female-headed households among Latinos may reflect a tendency to rely on Latinas for housekeeping responsibilities, while Latino men work outside the home to support the family. But for now, this is merely a researchable hypothesis.

TABLE 7: INDUSTRY OF EMPLOYED PERSONS BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: 1990

RACE/ORIGIN	*AG**	*MA*	*TRP*	*WT*	*RT*	*FIRE*	*SER*	*PAD*
TOTAL POP.	8.3	12.7	8.1	4.6	17.9	6.7	32.2	3.9
WHITE	8.7	12.3	8.1	4.7	17.9	6.8	32.1	3.8
BLACK	0.5	15.6	10.2	2.6	16.1	8.7	36.9	6.3
AM. IND., ESK., & ALEUT**	4.0	14.2	8.5	4.2	15.7	3.4	34.9	7.6
ASIAN & PAC. ISLAND	1.6	22.1	2.5	2.4	25.6	5.3	34.5	3.7
HISPANIC	3.2	24.7	8	5.8	18.2	3.7	26.6	4.2

**AG= Agriculture; MA = Manufacturing; TRP = Transportation & Communications; WT = Wholesale Trade; RT = Retail Trade; FIRE = Finance, Insurance & Real Estate; SER = Services; PAD = Public Administration*
***American Indian and Aleut*
Source: Same as Table 1

FAMILY WELLBEING

Family Composition

Usually the first sign of family wellbeing is the family composition. An intact family with more than one income earner can usually show a higher family income. Family composition is provided in Table 8.

TABLE 8: FAMILY TYPE BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN, NEBRASKA-1990.

RACE/ORIGIN	*MARRIED COUPLES (percent)*	*FEMALE HEADED NO HUSBAND PRESENT (percent)*	*OTHER (percent)*
All Pop.	84.8	11.7	3.6
White	86.4	10.3	3.3
Black	46.1	47.4	6.2
Amer Ind Esk & Aleut	53.9	39.0	7.1
Asian & Pacific Islander	80.3	10.4	9.3
Hispanic	71.8	19.3	8.9

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population, Social and Economic Characteristics, Nebraska, 1990, CP-2-29.

There are varying sizes of families within each of the groups shown in Table 8. In general, Latino, Black and Native American households have more children under the age of 18 than the other population groups. Juxtapose that information with the following data; i.e. the average number of children ever born per 1,000 women, ages 35 to 44, in Nebraska, 1990. For Latinas (aged 35-44), it was 2.413. This compares with Black women (2.412), American Indian women (3.069), White women (2.167), and Asian and Pacific Islander women (2.157). In general, half of the Latino families have about one more child on average than the White or Asian families. That means in turn that Latino households have more dependents or "mouths to feed" than most White or Asian households.

In Table 9, the severity and extent of poverty should be interpreted in terms of household or family size. Thus we notice that poverty is particularly worse among the groups with more children in the households. In particular, Indian, Black and Hispanic households, have much worse poverty than the households of Whites and Asians on average.

TABLE 9: MEDIAN INCOME AND POVERTY LEVEL BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN, NEBRASKA, 1990.

RACE/ORIGIN	Household Median Income (Dollars)	Persons Below the Poverty Level (Percent)
Total Population	26,016	9.9
White	28,430	31.1
Black	17,038	46.2
Amer Indian, Esk. & Aleut	13,520	20.1
Asian & Pacific Islander	3,109	20.1
Hispanic	21,372	22.7

Source: same as Table 6.

Midwest Poverty and Income

The level of poverty of families in the Midwest has deteriorated in the last ten years. Table 10 shows that in the Midwest the hardest hit group has been the Mexican origin family with 48.5% more poor families in 1990 than in 1980, followed by Puerto Rican families (28.9%) and black families (28.8%).

TABLE 10: MIDWEST FAMILIES BELOW POVERTY LEVEL BY RACE AND HISPANIC ORIGIN: 1980-1990

RACE/ORIGIN	*1980*	*1990*	*CHANGE*
MIDWEST			
White	855,531	952,457	16.8
Black	301,193	387,923	28.8
Hispanic	47,324	64,986	37.3
Mexican	27,258	40,467	48.5
Puerto Rican	13,119	16,906	28.9
Cuban	763	879	15.4
NEBRASKA			
White	28,729	27,328	1.4
Black	2,945	3,891	32.1
Hispanic	849	1,487	75.1
Mexican	703	1,313	86.8
Puerto Rican	15	24	60.0
Cuban	62	78	25.8

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: p70).

In Nebraska these numbers are quite intriguing. White poor families decreased by 1.4% between 1980-90. But Mexican and Puerto Rican poor families increased by 86.8% and 60%, respectively. Why have the Whites fared better compared to the Latinos? A researchable topic!

Table 11 also shows that median household income for Hispanics in Nebraska ($21,372) is not only below the Midwest Hispanic income ($26,645) but also has deteriorated by 15.2% over the last ten years. Hispanic households in Nebraska were the most hard hit group followed by Black households (8.5%).

TABLE 11: MIDWEST MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME BY RACE: 1980-1990
(IN 1989 CONSTANT DOLLARS)

RACE/PLACE	*1980*	*1990*	*CHANGE*
MIDWEST			
Total	30,322	29,334	-3.4
White	31,188	30,355	-2.7
Black	21,114	19,012	-10.0
Hispanic	27,695	26,645	-3.8
NEBRASKA			
Total	27,200	26,016	-4.4
White	27,526	26,435	-4.0
Black	18,614	17,038	-8.5
Hispanic	25,210	21,372	-15.2

Source: Aponte and Siles (1994: p76).

SUMMARY

Latinos constitute an important and growing share of Nebraska's population. With origins dating back to the frontier days, when Spaniards and Mexicans brought horses and sought wealth and trading partners throughout the Midwest, Hispanic chronicles provide a way for Nebraskans to celebrate their rich heritage of diversity. The Latino legacy also includes economic contributions to a number of major industries, wherein Latinos have held a variety of vital jobs and occupations.

More recently there has been a noted surge in Latino residents, mostly from Texas and Mexico, and most likely as an outcome of the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1896. Apparently, Latinos have come in response to jobs in expanding industries of services, retail trade and agribusiness (including boxed beef production). Although not often mentioned in political circles, the growing numbers of Latinos have also replaced the exiting Whites of Nebraska, adding to Nebraska's ability to maintain voter representation in Congress.

Nebraska's Latinos differ in important respects from other groups in Nebraska. They have relatively lower levels of educational attainment and figure too prominently among the poor. Unemployment is relatively high for Latinos, but not as high as the unemployment levels experienced by Indians and African Americans.

Missing in the literature is a general sense of their presence and contributions to Nebraska's economy. Little is written in the states' history books about Latinos/as. Numerous questions have not been addressed, or asked! It would be of value to know more about Latino settlement, their changing roles and places in society, and about the community wellbeing of Latinos/as. In sum, the time is right to pursue a number of lines of research about this important group. Hopefully new generations of Latino/a scholars will take up the challenge.

RIR and MES, August 1996

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Transmission of research findings to academic institutions, government officials, community leaders, and private sector executives through publications, public policy seminars, workshops, and private consultations.

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